

## HEALTH DEPARTMENT & BOARD OF HEALTH

### Fiscal Year 2011

The mission of the Amherst Board of Health, working through the Health Department, is to promote the health and wellbeing of our community. We fulfill this mission through our core functions: assessment, assurance, promotion, and policy development.

**Assurance:** ensuring that all Amherst residents have the services necessary to maintain or restore good health either by coordinating the delivery of services by other agencies, by policy or regulation development, or by providing services directly.

**Assessment:** systematically collecting, assembling, analyzing, and making available information regarding the health of the community, including statistics on health status, community health needs, and epidemiological studies of health problems.

**Promotion:** providing services and educational opportunities that encourage healthy environments and healthy lifestyles.

**Policy Development:** development and implementation of comprehensive public health policies, regulations and legislation.

The work of the Amherst Health Department is organized into six major areas: Access to Health Care, Infectious Disease Control, Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Environmental Health, Health Policy and Emergency Planning and Preparedness.

#### **I. Access to Health Care**

Ensuring access to health care for all Amherst residents continues to be a priority for the Health Department. Some of the departmental programs to address these concerns are Hampshire Health Connect, Casa Latina and “Peace in the Family: a Khmer Community Project.”

#### **Hampshire Health Connect**

Hampshire Health Connect (HHC) is a nonprofit organization created by a group of citizens, providers and representatives of local government, businesses, and insurers. HHC aims to link families and individuals who are underinsured or who have no health insurance with insurance programs they may be eligible for, or to medical providers willing to see HHC patients at no charge or on a sliding fee scale. HHC is housed in Cooley Dickinson Hospital.

HHC provides the services of a Latina caseworker, who has been working out of the Amherst Health Department to enroll all Amherst residents, but especially those whose first language is Spanish, in the program. As a result of this, Amherst residents’ participation in HHC, and the number of Latino clients served by HHC continues to rise. HHC was experiencing staff transitions during July 1, 2010 through December 31, 2010 and was unable to have a representative available at the Bangs Community Center, but during the remainder of FY 11, 96 Amherst residents were served. The enactment of Health Care Reform has had a great impact on the work of Hampshire Health Connect. Many who believed they were ineligible for state benefits are now seeking the help of HHC to enroll in the Commonwealth Care Programs.

### **Cambodian Health**

The Outreach Worker Lauren Srey continues to work with Khmer Health Advocates of Connecticut to promote self-help, self-education and awareness and access to health services and resources for the Amherst Cambodian community. She provides diabetes education and training, advocates for individuals needing support services and also works with many of the elders to help them become United States citizens. In partnership with Khmer Health Advocates, Lauren instituted the Medication Optimization Project, which brought pharmacists to meet with individual patients to assess the interactions and efficacy of the medications they were taking and facilitated accurate medication usage and compliance.

For this project KHA formed a team that included specially trained pharmacists using sophisticated MTM software and a bilingual community health worker who worked with patients over the course of 1 year. This team identified an average of 6.3 medication problems per patient and was able to resolve 93% of the problems over the study period.

## **II. Infectious Disease Control**

Controlling the spread of communicable diseases and food-borne illnesses is an important function of the Health Department.

Infectious Disease Surveillance and Control during FY11 included the following:

- ✦ 2 cases of active Tuberculosis.
- ✦ 5 cases of Tb prevention and control.
- ✦ One senior flu clinic, in conjunction with the Council on Aging, with 159 doses of seasonal influenza vaccine administered; 2 doses of Td (tetanus/diphtheria) vaccine and 10 doses of pneumonia vaccine administered.
- ✦ Three influenza clinics for town employees and their families with 312 doses of vaccine administered.
- ✦ Two outreach influenza clinics for underserved populations with 35 doses of vaccine administered.
- ✦ Monthly immunization clinics serving 58 children and 25 adults.

Case management/follow up for the following reportable infectious diseases: one case of Salmonella, 5 cases of Pertussis, 6 cases of Campylobacter, 1 case Group B Strep; 1 case of Hepatitis B; 6 cases of Hepatitis C, 15 cases of Lyme Disease; 1 case of Strep Pneumonia; 1 case of Giardiasis; and 1 case of Cryptosporidium.

## **III. Disease Prevention and Health Promotion**

Programs aimed at promoting health and preventing disease is another important aspect of the Health Department's work. Programs and interventions are targeted to the general public, as well as specific groups at increased health risk due to their particular demographic group, or the consequences of their own behavior or the behavior of others.

### **High Risk Groups**

The Health Director and Inspectors work together as a team to address the multi-faceted problem of hoarding, via joint inspections including mental health assessments and referrals to social services.

Town of Amherst Handicapped Permits are available to residents of Amherst who have a temporary or chronic condition that substantially limits their mobility. This permit allows residents to park in handicapped spaces within the Town of Amherst. This permit WILL NOT extend parking privileges beyond Town limits or the area colleges. A permit may be obtained from the Amherst Health Department. A doctor's certificate stating the condition and the expected duration of the disability is required.

#### **IV. Environmental Issues**

The Board of Health is required by state statute to perform many pertinent duties relating to the protection of public health, disease control and to advocate sanitary living conditions. The Health Department's inspectional staff consists of two Inspectors: one full-time and one part-time. Their responsibility is to regulate the laws, administer permits and perform inspections of residences and businesses relating to food. This fiscal year, the department successfully conducted 867 inspections and issued 313 Town permits.

#### **Food Safety**

The Health Department inspected 293 food handlers during the 2011 fiscal year. We administer permits for all food handlers encompassing: restaurants, recreational camps, bed and breakfast operations, residential kitchens, college institutions, hotels, motels, retail food stores, schools, mobile food units, temporary events, caterers, bakeries, and frozen food establishments.

The department's routine inspections and follow-up are crucial to protecting the public health's welfare. The division enforces Chapter X of the State Sanitary Code: Minimum Standard for Food. Establishments, 105 CMR 590.000. These state laws allow the Town of Amherst to conduct inspections, issue orders and suspend or revoke permits where necessary.

Health Department staff collaborate with local restaurants to be in compliance with the Federal Food Code. The code requires all restaurants to have a person in charge (PIC) who has knowledge of food-borne disease prevention and application of the Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) principles. Inspectors continue to monitor food managers to ensure obtainment of their Food Manager Certification and to develop a food protection program.

#### **Body Art Establishments**

There are two Body Art Establishments and 5 licensed practitioners in Amherst. The inspectors conducted 4 inspections.

#### **Swimming Pools**

No person shall operate or maintain any swimming, wading or special purpose pool without obtaining a permit from the Health Department. The permit shall be subject to the requirements of 105 CMR 435.00 and to any regulations as may be adopted by the Board of Health, provided, however, that said local board of health regulations shall not be applicable to a state owned or operated swimming, wading or special purpose pool. The Health Department issued 14 swimming pool permits, and conducted 16 inspections.

### **Recreational Camps**

We continue to perform extensive monitoring and inspections to sustain quality and assurance of compliance. This fiscal year there were 18 recreational camps. The total number of inspections conducted for recreational camps is 52.

Throughout the year we receive new information from the Community Sanitation Program. The Department makes every effort to forward the new material and information to all of our camp operators in a timely manner and these packets are now made available online.

### **Housing**

The Health Department upholds all nuisance and housing complaints. Chapter II of the State Sanitary Code: Minimum Standards of Fitness for Human Habitation, M.G.L. c.111, ss. 127A and 127B: 105 CMR 410.000, upon request or upon the department's initiative the Health Department can certify violations, issue orders, hold hearings, grant variances and institute court proceedings if needed to enforce such orders. This fiscal year the Inspectors conducted 80 inspections including fraternities, sororities and voucher program related issues.

M.G.L. c.111, s.122, allows the Health Department to investigate nuisances which in the Board's opinion may be injurious to the public health. The Health Department may destroy, prevent or remove such nuisances and make regulations relative. There were 51 nuisance complaints mostly involving trash. All nuisance complaints were addressed and abated. The Health Department organized a Bed Bugs Seminar for the landlords of Amherst. Twenty landlords attended the informative event.

### **Septic System**

The Environmental Health Department enforces the State 310 CMR 15.000, Environmental Code, Title 5: Standard requirements for the siting, construction, inspection, upgrade, expansion of on-site sewage treatment, for the transport and disposal of septage. This fiscal year the Inspectors conducted 28 percolation tests and 18 septic system finals. Beginning in 2008, the Health Department requires a Title V witness fee to be paid to the Town of \$200.00. In FY 10, the Inspectors conducted 41 Title V inspections.

### **Septage and Garbage**

The Health Department enforces Title V of the State Environmental Code; Minimum Requirements for the Subsurface Disposal of Sewage, 310 CMR 15.00. We've issued 16 permits for the removal or transportation of garbage and offal this fiscal year.

### **V. Emergency Preparedness**

The Health Department continues to develop a group of medical and non-medical volunteers through the Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) Program. There are currently 30 members on the Amherst MRC roster. The Amherst MRC has held training sessions since the fall of 2004. The group is trained in the National Incident Management System (NIMS), Emergency Dispensing Site (EDS) operations, Shelter Operations, and other public health emergency and disaster preparedness-related topics. Health Department staff are involved in several local preparedness organizations such as the Hampshire Public Health Emergency Preparedness Coalition and Five College Public Safety Emergency Preparedness.

## **VI. Health Policy and Planning**

During FY 11, the Board of Health was comprised of the following members: David Ahlfeld, Chair, Jennifer Brown, Maria Bulzacchelli, Nancy Gilbert, and David Kaufman, MD. The Board of Health, under Massachusetts General Laws (M.G.L.), as well as state and local regulations, is responsible for setting, composing and enforcing policies and regulations which promote and protect the public health of Amherst residents and visitors.

The Board of Health reviewed and approved amendments to the *Amherst Board of Health Regulations for Private Wells* effective March 15, 2011. The purpose of this regulation is to protect the public health and general welfare by contributing to the protection of groundwater in the Town and to assure private wells intended for drinking water use meet applicable water quality standards. The amended regulation simplifies the permitting process for wells not intended for drinking water purposes including wells for Ground Source Heat Pumps and Agricultural purposes.

The Board of Health also reviewed and approved amendments to the *Regulations of the Amherst Board of Health Tobacco Sales Permits and Sale of Tobacco Products to Minors* effective January 1, 2011. This regulation is an amendment that changes the definition of a Tobacco Product to include: *any non-FDA approved nicotine delivery systems such as electronic cigarettes.*

The Board of Health also engaged in discussions of the proposed zoning bylaw changes regarding the Keeping of Accessory Livestock and Poultry. The Amherst Board of Health agreed no significant risk to human health is posed from properly maintained livestock or poultry facilities which might be implemented under the proposed changes to the bylaw. The Board of Health also agreed the Animal Wellness Officer, under state law (M.G.L. 129, Section 7), has the authority to address the health and well being of domestic animals and to insure domestic animal facilities are properly maintained and saw no need to create a Board of Health regulation. However, the Board of Health did support the creation of a registration process which could aid the Animal Wellness Officer and the Health Department in maintaining a census of domestic animals in the Town.

### **FY 11 Board of Health**

David Ahlfeld, Chair  
Jennifer Brown  
Maria Bulzacchelli  
Nancy Gilbert  
David Kaufman, MD